

A FEW HISTORICAL FACTS

— CONCERNING THE —

Murderous Assault at Pine River

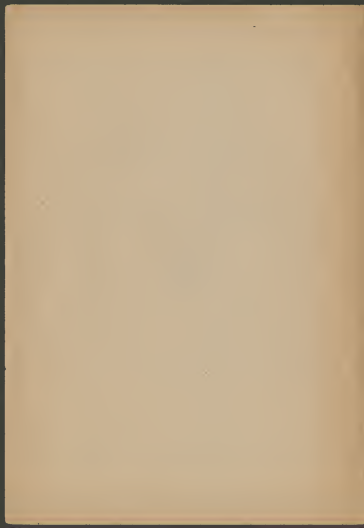
— ALSO THE —

LIFE, MINISTRY, ANCESTRY
AND CHILDHOOD

— OF —

JAMES J. STRANG





NORTHERN ISLANDER Extra

SANT JAMES, THURSDAY, JULY 14, 1853

MURDEROUS ASSAULT — ATTACK ON SHERIFF MILLER—SIX MEN WOUNDED!

Yesterday morning Sheriff Miller left Galilee for Pine River to summon Jurors for the Circuit Court to be held at this place next week. When he left here the evening previous he was accompanied by only a boats crew of five men. But at Galilee learning that new threats had been given out at Pine River of killing any man who should attempt to serve any kind of process there he took another boat and crew and went over unarmed, believing that the presence of that number of witnesses would prevent any act of violence until his business was explained, when he reasonably believed no objection would be made.

The Sheriff arrived at 2 o'clock P. M. and within twenty-five minutes performed his duty and got into his boats with his party to return; when they were immediately fired upon by a party of armed men some fifty in number, and the firing continued until they had shoved off and rowed beyond the range of their guns.

The Pine River people immediately manned three boats and gave chase. The leading boat in chase contained twenty-five men. There was a light wind at the time, and while it lasted the Sheriff and his party kept out of reach of the guns, but when the wind died down, about ten miles out, it rapidly approached and renewed the firing, which continued for five miles when the Sher-

iff and his party made the Bark Morgan, Capt. Stone, and the pursuers hauled off and returned. The two other boats in pursuit were nearly a mile behind.

In this murderous assault more than two hundred guns were fired, all within short range, yet not a man was killed, and only six wounded.

As the Sheriff approached the landing, numerous armed men were seen running about and guns were fired apparently as signals for a general rally. As some trifling depredations had recently been committed by two or three men from Pine River at Galilee, it was supposed that this rally was to prevent an arrest of the offenders. And having no process for the arrest of any person and no business except the summoning of Jurors, no uneasiness was felt on account of it.

The party landed upon a narrow beach under a bluff, covered with a dense growth of timber and bushes. Several men came around with menacing words and manner, but apparently partially satisfied, learning the Sheriff's business. Armed men were constantly gathering on the bluff above, and as the party were ready to embark and return a body of thirty filed down a narrow path, with guns in their hands and formed in a row on the beach by the boats. In the intervening time three men had been down to the boats, and as they returned one of them was heard to say "they have no guns."

The boats were but just shoved off,

and the last man climbing in, when the firing commenced, within thirty feet. A considerable surf was breaking on the shore, and it was difficult to get the boats off. The men had to stand up in full view and shove off using their oars for setting poles. The raking fire of thirty men on the beach, and a plunging fire from probably an equal number on the bluff, sent the balls like hailstones about them until they got beyond the range. All the wounds were received here. Isaac Pierce kept his feet, working with a setting pole with one hand, the other arm swinging about with both bones broken, until he sank down with the loss of blood, and A. J. Porter, kept his seat and steered the boat for miles after a ball entered back of his hip joint and passing lengthwise of the limb lodged in the hollow of the knee.

That they were not all slain; that a single one escaped alive is an extraordinary instance of the care of God for his creatures. The men on shore knew that there was nothing to oppose them; that they had only to shoot the Sheriff's party down like sheep in a yard, and therefore took deliberate aim. Nothing but the power of the Almighty could have saved them from utter destruction. The intention evidently was to murder them all, there on the beach, and the pursuit was kept up so great a distance, undoubtedly, that there might be no witnesses to testify of the crime.

Wounded.—Isaac Pierce, left arm shot through below the elbow, breaking both bones. It is now doing well and there is every prospect that the arm will become sound.

A. J. Porter, severe flesh wound, a large ball passing lengthwise the thigh nearly to the knee. Doing well, but will be laid up several weeks.

Andrew J. Hale, shot through under the shoulder joint cutting the main artery. He was near bleeding to death, but is now able to walk about.

J. T. Pierce has a rifle ball flattened against the hip bone.

Alexander Wentworth and Lewis Briggs have each a shot hole through the flesh of the left arm.

The following escaped uninjured:—Joshua L. Miller Sheriff, Franklin Johnson, Lorenzo Tubbs, Orlando P. Briggs, L. D. Hickey, David Finch, Egbert Carpenter, Christopher Scott, and F. W. Longfield.

The whole party returned to Callee the night of the same day they set out, and early this morning Dr. H. D. McCulloch reached there and dressed their wounds.

The Indians at Pine River took no part in the attack. On the other hand they informed Sheriff Miller that the men there intended to kill him;—advised him not to go up from the beach, but to re-embark immediately, because the men were gathering, and they were too many for him, and determined to kill him.

Neither the Sheriff or his men were armed. There were only four guns with them, and those only such as are commonly used for fowling. To avoid any show of hostility, before reaching Pine River these were laid in the bottom of one of the boats and covered with the men's coats. They were not taken up nor seen by any one while at Pine River. Cable and two others residing at

Pine River went down to the boats and reported to their comrades, "they have no guns," and it was not until this report that a company of sixty men having a bluff and timber for shelter ventured to attack fifteen, standing in open view, unarmed.

We know not where to look for a parallel to an act so cowardly, so cold blooded and murderous, and which accomplished so little with its means.

A large number of the attacking party were recognized, and measures are being taken to bring them to justice. There would be no difficulty in fitting out a party from here who would make Pine River settlement as bare as the palm of a man's hand; but the moral effect of sending a half dozen to State Prison is worth more than the death of them all. Legal remedies are better than violent ones.

We know that those who forever seek some occasion against the Mormons, and are anxious to justify every wrong done them, will imagine some excuse for this. But when it is considered that there are seventy-five men at Pine River of known and avowed hostility to the Mormons, and the Sheriff's party consisted of but fourteen all told, and more than twenty-five miles from the nearest Mormon settlement, and therefore could not have sought a collision; and that the approach was six miles in

sight, and the landing made in the midst of the Pine River settlement, in open daylight at two o'clock P. M. and that the Sheriff had no business but to summon Jurors, it will be impossible for the most prejudiced to imagine any excuse for this murderous attack.

It has already been said that knowing the hostile feelings of the people at Pine River, the Sheriff ought not to have gone there to summon Jurors. But in this matter he has no choice. He does not select the Jurors. They are drawn by the County Clerk from lists prepared by the Township officers long previous.

The fact that the Township officers in making out the Jury lists put on a due proportion of names of persons not Mormons, is an evidence that their duties were faithfully done, and that they are seeking no undue advantage to themselves, for a single Jurymen can defeat a verdict. Those names being on the lists the Clerk could not prevent their being drawn, unless by corruption in office. Having been drawn it was the duty of the Sheriff to summon them. Had he neglected to do it, it would have indicated an intention to corrupt the fountains of Justice, by refusing to certain classes of citizens any place in the Jury box. A murderous attack of this kind could not be anticipated, and therefore could be no excuse for neglecting to summon the Jurors.

ANCESTRY AND CHILDHOOD OF JAMES J. STRANG

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF 1885

(Copied from original manuscript, now in possession of his son, Chas. J. Strang, April 1892.)

I was born March 21st, 1813, on Popple Ridge Road, town of Scipio, Cayuga County, New York. My infancy was a period of continual sickness and extreme suffering, and I have understood that at one time I was so low as to be thought dead, and that preparations were made for my burial. All my early recollections are painful, and at this day I am utterly unable to comprehend the feeling of those who look back with pleasure on their infancy, and regret the rapid passing away of childhood. Till I had children of my own, happy in their infantile gambols, the recollection of those days produced a kind of creeping sensation akin to terror.

My parentage was decidedly respectable. My father is a descendant of Henry De l'Estrange, who accompanied the Duke of York's expedition to the New World to conquer the Dutch Colony of New Netherlands, now the State of New York, and the family has ever since retained an honorable rank, and is now scattered over nearly all the states, and branches of it are found in British America and the West Indies.

Tradition says they originally settled at New Utrecht, on Long Island, but Henry De l'Estrange, before his death, removed to the town of Rye, Westchester county, New York, where some of his descendants remained till since 1840.

Tradition also says that my great

grandfather accompanied the first English expedition to Michinmackinac, during which he contracted a dangerous sickness that he was sent back for medical treatment, and died on the way from the residence of Sir William Johnson to Albany. He left two sons, William and Gabriel, who were brought up among their mother's relatives, and by that means became separated from the family. They settled at a very early period at Stillwater, in Saratoga County, New York, and were lost sight of by the Strangs in the south part of New York and on numerous genealogical trees found in that country the limb breaks off with their names.

My father, Clement Strang, is the fifth son of Gabriel Strang. Coming originally of a Norman stock, who have continually intermarried with the Dutch and German families of the Hudson. He partakes (as I do) more of the German type than any other. Counting continually in the male line for ten generations back our ancestors are Jews, but so large is the admixture of other blood, that the Semitic type seems to be quite lost.

My mother is of the purest Yankee stock from Rhode Island, her father Jesse James, and her grandfather, James James, having left there about the time of her birth, and settled in Greenfield, Saratoga County, New York, where they died full of years and honors.

My father and mother are yet living (1855) with a reasonable prospect that they may remain many years. They are both small of stature, my father being only five feet three or four inches, and mother less, of comely appearance, amiable, affectionate, charitable, remarkably industrious, skillful in labor and judicious in business, and unsullied moral and religious character. I have a brother, David Strang, two years older than myself, and a sister, Myraette Losen, five years younger, and it is a great pleasure to know that there has never been a disagreement to amount to so much as a momentary coldness between any two members of the family.

I learn from many sources that in childhood I exhibited extraordinary mental imbecility. Indeed, if I may credit what is told me on the subject, all who knew me except my parents thought me scarcely more than idiotic. Several facts remain in my recollection which support this opinion. I still recollect that school teachers not unfrequently turned me off with little or no attention, as though I was too stupid to learn and too dull to feel neglect, and my school fellows did not forget to add their slight. I doubt not my appearance at least justified this opinion. I remember myself as little disposed to play, seldom cheerful, and scarcely ever taking the slightest interest in the plays of others. Long, weary days I sat upon the floor thinking, thinking, thinking! occasionally asking a strange uninfantile question, and never getting an answer. My mind wandered over fields that old men shrink from, seeking rest and finding none, till darkness gathered

thick around and I burst into tears, and cried aloud; and with a voice scarcely able to articulate told my mother that my head ached.

During the first and part of the second year of my life my father's residence was in that part of Scipio now included in Ledyard. He left for Manlius in August, 1814, when I was about seventeen months old, and with a singular tenacity of memory I kept that place so perfectly in memory that after twenty years absence I was able to recognize the location in riding through.

To the present time the recollection of my mother carrying me in her arms, nursing me, and conversing with her sister about me, and of the road along which they walked, and the work going on by the roadside, is as distinct as the events of yesterday. It is the brightest of the few bright spots of my childhood, the only recollection of long years not accompanied with a sensation of pain.

Until 1816 my parents remained in Manlius, my father carrying on the farm of Mr. Fleming, an extensive farmer from Maryland, who also kept a very popular tavern on the Great Western turnpike. I have very few recollections of that period beyond an ill-defined but very strong attachment to several members of his family, and several of the colored people he brought there, though I have seen very few of them in forty years, and none of them in thirty-two. Such are the affections of childhood; at least they are such with me.

In February, 1816, my father removed with his family to Hanover, Chautauqua County, New York, where he remained twenty years. His first

location was two miles northeast of Forestville, and three-fourths of a mile from Walnut Creek, on the east side of the road, at the four corners, but a few years of the latter portion of that period we lived on Walnut Creek flats, in the same neighborhood.

There I grew up, and around that place cluster nearly all the recollections, pleasant or painful, of my childhood and youth.

On our journey I remember Buffalo as a small struggling village of thirty or forty houses, occupied as taverns and drinking shops, so crowded that it was a matter of favor to get entertainment, where the same low, open, filthy room was used for bar-rooms, dining-rooms, and kitchen, and a few houses the latter part of the night accommodated as many drowsy, drunken and tired sleepers as could lie down upon the floor.

From Buffalo we went to the mouth of Cattaraugus Creek on the ice. Father was heavy loaded, and obliged to travel slow. There had been a day or two of mild weather, the snow was melted on the ice, and had already thawed many a treacherous opening, and covered with water as the ice was, it was difficult for a stranger to keep the way, over the thirty miles of dreary waste of ice, without a landmark.

To secure a passage by daylight, father got a man who was going with a two-horse sleigh, and with no load but his wife, to take my mother and her two children as far as Cattaraugus. I only remember that the water sometimes came into the sleigh-box, that the driver frequently jumped the horses across wide chasms in the ice, and sometimes found them so

wide that he dare not cross them, and went great distances around, and that my mother was terribly frightened, and hugged my brother and I to her with an almost suffocating grasp.

I have since I was grown up frequently heard her speak of that passage as having driven her almost to distraction, a terror much heightened by the continual quarrels and mutual profanity of the couple with whom we rode.

We lost sight of father immediately after starting, and next saw him at Mack's tavern, Cattaraugus. The wind got into the northwest the afternoon of the day we started, and towards night one of the most terrible snow-storms of that latitude came on, obliterating in a few minutes every vestige of track on the ice, filling the air so that a man could not see the length of sled and team, and rendering it utterly impossible to keep a course even for a few rods.

This storm overtook father midway in the lake, about twenty miles above Buffalo. What he suffered and how he survived none can know, only those who have experienced a similar catastrophe. I only remember that my mother cried incessantly, and ever and anon clasped my brother and myself convulsively in her arms, till three days passed, when he came to us as one from the dead. Several reports of his death had reached us, some by persons who had seen his frozen body. Whether some persons really had perished and been mistaken for him, or the reports were wholly false, I do not know, but the former is probable.

From Cattaraugus to my father's

place in the same town was than two days' travel, though on an air line not six miles. The route was by Sheridan Center and Forestville.

I attended school the following summer, where the most moderate qualifications for teaching were satisfactory. There were but two scholars who knew the alphabet, and none who spelled "easy words of two syllables."

From this time till I was twelve years old I attended district school more or less every year, but the terms were usually short, the teachers inexperienced and ill-qualified to teach, and my health such as to preclude attentive study or steady attendance. I estimate my attendance during the whole period as equal to six months steady attendance with health for study.

My parents had good government. Their family was raised without beating. I can remember being very slightly whipped by my father twice, and by my mother once. My sister was raised without ever suffering chastisement, either at home or in school, and my brother's fortune.

(Here the manuscript ends as if he was interrupted in his work, the paper laid aside, and the work never resumed. This gives the principal events of his life to twelve years of age. In another manuscript book I have some events of later school days at Forestville Academy, and still later the journal of his first year in law practice, including his courtship and marriage.)

CHAS. J. STRANG.

Lansing, Mich., April 3, 1892.

The Following is a Faithful Account of the

MURDER OF JAMES J. STRANG

MURDEROUS ASSAULT

"On Monday last (June 16th, 1856) the U. S. steamer entered this harbor at about 1 o'clock p. m. and was visited by the inhabitants promiscuously during the afternoon.

"At about 7 o'clock Capt. McBlain sent a messenger (San Barnard, the Pilot) to Mr. Strang, requesting him to visit him on board. Mr. Strang immediately accompanied the messenger, and just as they were stepping on the bridge leading to the pier in front of F. Johnson & Co.'s store, two assassins approached in the rear, unobserved by either of them, and fired upon Mr. Strang with pistols. The first shot took effect upon the left side of the head, entering a little back of the top of the ear, and rebounding, passed out near the top of the head.

"This shot, fired from a horse pistol, brought him down, and he fell on the left side, so that he saw the assassins as they fired the second and third shots from a revolver, both taking effect upon his person, one just below the temple, on the right side of the face, and lodged in the cheek bone; the other on the left side of the spine, near the tenth rib, followed the rib about two inches and a half and lodged.

"Mr. Strang recognized in the persons of the assassins, Thomas Bedford and Alexander Wentworth. Wentworth had a revolver, and Bedford a horse pistol, with which he struck him over the head and face, while lying on the ground. The as-

sassins immediately fled on board the U. S. steamer, with pistols in hand, claiming her protection.

"The assault was committed in view of several of the officers and crew from the deck of the steamer, also Dr. H. D. McCulloch, Franklin Johnson, and others, and no effort made to stop it.

"Mr. Strang was taken up by a few friends, and some of the officers of the boat, and carried to the house of Messrs. Prindles, where the surgeon of the steamer made an examination of his wounds, and declared recovery hopeless.

"Process was taken out for the apprehension of the assassins and the sheriff of the county called on Capt. McBlair for their delivery. The captain refused to give them up, saying that he would take them to Mackinac, and deliver them into the hands of the civil authorities of the state there.

"The steamer left the next day, carrying off all the persons supposed to be complicated in the affair, thus affording military protection to murderers, and overthrowing the sovereignty of civil law. Hopes are entertained of Mr. Strang's recovery."

Ed. Note.—Mr. Strang passed away July 9th, 1856, 19 days after being shot.

This account of the murder of James J. Strang is faithful and true as many witnesses have seen and known.

The above news story is copied from The Daily Northern Islander of

June 20th, 1856, a daily newspaper that was printed on Beaver Island, and we reprint it to show to the readers of The Precept that the murderers of James J. Strang were never brought to justice, and that the federal Government "consented to the blood of A MIGHTY PROPHET OF GOD just the same as the state of Illinois consented to the blood of the PROPHET Joseph Smith, and while in the case of Joseph they did go through the formality of a trial of the perpetrators of that dastardly crime yet it was only a formality and resulted in a full and complete acquittal of those miserable beasts and cut-throats, that had snuffed out the life of a young and innocent man, but in the case of the Prophet James there was never even the least formality of trial. These things should be very conclusive and undeniable proof that this nation of people HAS forfeited all right to a prophet of God and has chosen rather to follow after their own wicked ways, even though this wickedness leads them to commit cold blooded murder, as it was in the case of both the Prophet Joseph and the Prophet James.

The duly constituted and delegated authorities of the state of Illinois, that permitted the murderers of the Prophet Joseph to go stark free after committing such an atrocious crime, by that action consented to the blood of the prophet as also the captain of the U. S. steamer that gave refuge to the dastardly murderers of the Prophet James and that protection which he gave, was given by virtue of his being a representative of the Federal government, therefore the blood of the Prophet Joseph was and is upon the state of Illinois, and blood of the Prophet James was and is upon the Federal Government itself, and the blood of these two martyrs, will cry to the Great God of Israel against this nation of people until such time as they REPENT of these terrible crimes, and the calamities and pestilence will wax worse and worse, until they do repent and acknowledge "that God's ways are not man's ways" and "live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" even though He choose to speak by the mouths of Joseph SMITH and JAMES J. STRANG.

